

HEIDI HEITKAMP  
NORTH DAKOTA  
HART SENATE BUILDING 110  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510  
PH: 202-224-2043  
FAX: 202-224-7776  
TOLL FREE: 1-800-223-4457

<http://www.heitkamp.senate.gov>

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 8, 2017

COMMITTEES:  
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William Werkheiser  
Acting Director  
U.S. Geological Survey  
301 7<sup>th</sup> St SW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Werkheiser,

I would like to request that the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) conduct an updated oil and gas resource assessment for the Bakken Formation and the Three Forks Formation in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana.

As you know, the most recent survey of the Bakken region by USGS in 2013 more than doubled the estimated mean resources for technically recoverable oil to 7.38 billion barrels, which included an estimated 6.7 trillion cubic feet of recoverable natural gas. Since mid-2014, the price of oil has dropped by more than half from highs of well over \$100 per barrel and has been hovering near \$50 per barrel for most of 2017. As a result of the drop in prices, the oil industry was forced to innovate in order to stay competitive in a lower-for longer scenario. Through various new methods, processes, technological innovations, the oil industry has figured out how to both lower the cost of development and production – and extract more oil from both new and old wells.

The North Dakota Industrial Commission reports that these new technologies and creative methods adopted by the energy industry have led to the production lifespan of producing wells to increase dramatically year over year since 2012. In 2017, the average producing well has extracted nearly twice as much oil by the seventh-month of production as the average well did in 2011.

As the energy industry continues to innovate – and we learn more about the unique geology in this region that holds immense oil and gas reserves – the amount of technically recoverable oil and natural gas will continue to increase. I understand that a new USGS assessment for the Bakken is scheduled for 2020, but I urge you to conduct an assessment prior to that date in order to gather the best available data to better inform development, investment, and other resource allocation decisions by state, local, and tribal governments and oil and gas producers. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Senator Heitkamp  
United States Senator

BISMARCK OFFICE:  
228 FEDERAL BUILDING  
220 EAST ROSSER AVENUE  
BISMARCK, ND 58501  
PH: 701-258-4648  
FAX: 701-258-1254

DICKINSON OFFICE:  
40 1ST AVENUE WEST  
SUITE 202  
DICKINSON, ND 58601  
PH: 701-225-0974  
FAX: 701-225-3287

FARGO OFFICE:  
306 FEDERAL BUILDING  
657 SECOND AVENUE NORTH  
FARGO, ND 58102  
PH: 701-232-8030 – 1-800-223-4457  
FAX: 701-232-6449

GRAND FORKS OFFICE:  
33 S. 3RD ST., SUITE B  
GRAND FORKS, ND 58201  
PH: 701-775-9601  
FAX: 701-746-1990

MINOT OFFICE:  
105 FEDERAL BUILDING  
100 FIRST STREET S.W.  
MINOT, ND 58701  
PH: 701-852-0703  
FAX: 701-838-8196